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DULLES' BRINKMANSHIP

A biography devoted to the life, times, and travels of Secretary of State John Foster Dulles counts up four times he and Mr. Eisenhower teetered on "the brink of war." In an interview printed in Life magazine, Mr. Dulles had previously admitted three precarious balancing acts. The new biography is another product of Mr. Luce's staff, for its author works in the Washington office of Time.

The fourth essay at the brink, it is disclosed, occurred when Mr. Dulles last July 19 withdrew the United States offer to help President Nasser of Egypt build his proposed high dam on the Nile at Aswan. John Robinson Beals, the biographer, calls this a "calculated major gambit in the cold war."

This statement confirms remarks credited to C. D. Jackson, vice president of Time magazine, in a speech at Toronto March 12. Mr. Jackson, a former Presidential adviser on psychological warfare, is one of Mr. Eisenhower's speech writers and presumably is an insider in administration policy.

Published accounts quoted him as saying the United States "touched off the middle east crisis to force a showdown with Russia." Jackson, recounting a luncheon conversation with Dulles, said that the secretary of state, in withdrawing the Aswan offer, was well aware that Nasser, by way of reprisal, might nationalize the Suez canal, but that he was not averse to that result in his quest for a "showdown."

Jackson was later hauled before a senate foreign relations and armed services subcommittee to explain his statements. He said he had been misquoted and produced the statement of one of his auditors to that effect. The newspaper reporter and three other guests at the luncheon where he spoke said he had been quoted correctly.

Officially it is said that the biography is not an "authorized" one, but there is no doubt that Mr. Dulles cooperated to some extent with the author. At any rate, the statement that the Aswan affair constituted a fourth excursion into brinkmanship, as Harry Truman called it, seems to establish that Jackson represented Dulles' position correctly. We are thus left with the impression that Mr. Dulles has a chronic addiction to flirtations with war.

So far the country seems to have been saved from the consequences of the Dulles-Eisenhower foreign policy mostly thru luck. Their first approach to the brink was in the stalemated Korean war. The President passed word thru Mr. Nehru's Indian government to the Chinese Communists that he intended to open up with atomic tactical weapons and fight the war to victory if they didn't assent to an armistice. He got the armistice, without victory.

The second essay in brinkmanship occurred when Mr. Eisenhower secretly advised Chiang Kai-shek, Chinese nationalist leader, that the United States would defend the Quemoy and Matsu island approaches to Formosa. That was in 1955, when Mr. Eisenhower obtained stand-by authority from Congress to fight in defense of Formosa and the Pescadores islands. The Dulles biography provides the news that Quemoy and Matsu were comprehended in the deal.

The third advance to the brink was in 1954, when the French were fighting a losing war with the Viet Minh Communists in Indo-China. A White House conference decided that the United States should join the war in combination with Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, provided the French kept fighting. We were saved from that adventure only because Britain reneged.

We may suppose that the present Eisenhower middle eastern "doctrine" is an extension of the brinkmanship that began with Mr. Dulles' withdrawal of Aswan aid. It is yet to be seen how that venture will pay off, but the Russians are talking in an ugly way.

The country, mostly unknown to the public, seems to have been stretching its luck in these sallies to the brink. It

would appear not irrelevant to inquire how often and how close the act can be performed before we go over and down.

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